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# Representations of Feminism in The Drama Series *Qalb Al Adala*

## تمثيلات نسوية في المسلسل الدرامي قلب العدالة

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**ABSTRACT**

**Purpose**: This study discusses the representation of feminism in the drama series Qalb Al Adala. Qalb Al Adala is an Emirati drama series that follows the perseverance of a woman named Farah in pursuing her career. This series was produced in January 2017 and aired in September 2017. This study aims to explain the representation of feminism and the signs representing feminism in the series. **Design/methods/approach:** This study uses the qualitative study method along with documentation and literature reviews. The theories applied in this study are the theory of feminism and the semiotic theory of John Fiske, which is based on codes of television. **Findings**: Results show that Qalb Al Adala represents the values of liberal feminism and existential feminism. The signs representing feminism are depicted through conventional representation with a code of character. On an ideological level, feminist values are represented by the values of liberal feminism and existential feminism.

**KEYWORDS:**
*Feminism, Arab Film, Justice, Qalb Al Adala, Semiotics.*

**الملخص**

الفيلم هو أحد أنواع وسائل الإعلام لنقل التطلعات والأيديولوجيات الجديدة للجمهور. كان للنسوية في صناعة السينما في دولة الإمارات العربية المتحدة تأثير كبير على تطور الأدب النسوي. تناقش هذه الدراسة تمثيل النسوية في المسلسل الدرامي قلب العدالة. قلب العدالة هو مسلسل درامي إماراتي يتتبع مثابرة امرأة تدعى فرح في متابعة مسيرتها المهنية. تم إنتاج هذا المسلسل في يناير 2017 وتم بثه في سبتمبر 2017. تهدف هذه الدراسة إلى شرح تمثيل النسوية والعلامات التي تمثل النسوية في السلسلة. تستخدم هذه الدراسة طريقة الدراسة النوعية جنبا إلى جنب مع الوثائق ومراجعات الأدبيات. النظريات المطبقة في هذه الدراسة هي نظرية النسوية والنظرية السيميائية لجون فيسك التي تستند إلى رموز التلفزيون. تظهر النتائج أن قلب العدالة تمثل قيم النسوية الليبرالية والنسوية الوجودية. يتم تصوير العلامات التي تمثل النسوية من خلال التمثيل التقليدي مع رمز الشخصية. على المستوى الأيديولوجي ، يتم تمثيل القيم النسوية بقيم النسوية الليبرالية والنسوية الوجودية.

**الكلمات المفتاحية:** النسوية، الفيلم العربي، العدالة، قلب العدالة، السيميائية

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## 1. Introduction

The United Arab Emirates (UAE) is one of the many oil-producing countries located southeast of the Arabian Peninsula. It is a federation that consists of seven emirates: Abu Dhabi, Ajman, Dubai, Fujairah, Rad al-Khaimah, Sharjah, and Umm al-Quwain. The country covers 82.880 km$^2$ and has a tropical climate. In 2006, the country had a population of 2.6 million. Emiratis, South Asians, Asians, and several other ethnic groups live in the UAE.[1]

The heterogenous population in the UAE, whether by race; ethnicity; or nationality, becomes the cause of diversity in the social and cultural aspects of the lives of its people. One example is the aspect of family life based on Islamic values. The common familial structure in the United Arab Emirates is the patriarchal patrilineal family structure, where the prerogative rights in a family lie on the male family members such as fathers, husbands, and sons. Male family members are deemed as custodians of female family members. These values are common in countries in the Arab Gulf. An example of this phenomenon is the difference in cultural practices such as the birth of sons that are celebrated more lavishly than the birth of daughters.[2]

Efforts are made by the UAE to reform its society in areas such as education, healthcare, the role of women, and preservation of the environment. According to the United Arab Emirates Embassy in Washington DC, the quality of education in the UAE has increased significantly. This is proven by the increase in literacy rates of adults in the country. In 1975, the literacy rate of adult men is at fifty-four percent (54%) and the literacy rate for adult women is at thirty-one percent (31%). The new rates show that ninety-five percent (95%) of both adult men and women are literate. The increase in numbers also shows that there is an improvement in education for women in the UAE. In the past, only around thirty percent (30%) of women in the UAE were able to receive an education. Ever since His Highness Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan, the first president of the UAE, pioneered giving education to all women; around ninety-five point eight percent (95,8%) of UAE women are currently finishing their compulsory education.[3]

The impact of the improvement of women's education includes wider roles for women in social and cultural sectors in the country. Furthermore, the Constitution of the United Arab Emirates (دستور دولة الامارات العربية المتحدة) has guaranteed equal rights between men and women. Under the constitution, women have the right to legal

[1] David C King, *Cultures of The World United Arab Emirates* (Tarrytown: Marshall Cavendish Benchmark, 2008).
[2] Sara Ashencaen Crabtree, "Culture, Gender and the Influence of Social Change amongst Emirati Families in the United Arab Emirates," *Journal of Comparative Family Studies* 38, no. 4 (December 1, 2007): 575–88, https://doi.org/10.3138/jcfs.38.4.575.
[3] Mohammed Taukeer, "South Asian Migrants in United Arab Emirates: Impact and Challenges," *Pakistan Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences* 10, no. 3 (2022): 942–51.

equality, access education, enter the workforce, own property, and receive guaranteed equal access to facilities at work, healthcare, and family welfare. The commitment of the UAE to improving women's rights has gained acknowledgment from the international community.[4]

These improvements also drove people in the UAE to start expressing themselves through culture and creativity, mainly through literature such as film and drama. Film and drama started developing in the UAE in 2001. In the article "Film as Nation Building: The UAE Goes Into the Movie Business," Alia Yunis (2014) stated that films in the UAE are produced to introduce the national identity of the country.[5] As time goes by, the film industry in the UAE progressed rapidly and produced films in many different genres that depict the ideology and reality of life in the UAE. Films and dramas produced by the UAE are also frequently nominated in international film festivals and are available to watch on various online platforms.

*Qalb Al Adala* (قلب العدالة) is a drama series produced by Beelink Productions and Image Nation Abu Dhabi FZ, supervised by the Abu Dhabi Judicial Department. The series is in Arabic and is set in Abu Dhabi, UAE. *Qalb Al Adala* was written by renowned film directors William Finkelstein and Walter Parkes. William Finkelstein is an American film director who won two Emmy Awards in 1989 and 1990. He was also nominated in the Outstanding Drama Series Category at the Emmy Awards in 2001. Walter Parkes is an American film director who was nominated for an Oscar for his works *He Named Me Malala* and *Flight*.[6]

*Qalb Al Adala* follows Farah, portrayed by actress Fatima Al Taei, the daughter of a renowned lawyer in the UAE and is following in her father's footsteps. Throughout her career as a lawyer, she and her law firm handled many big cases. Farah is portrayed as a woman who is an ambitious lawyer and has the tenacity to establish her own career without the help of her father.[7]

This drama series consists of eighteen episodes and aired on local media on September 17, 2017. The series was produced as a strategy from the Department of Justice of Abu Dhabi in building awareness and trust in the people of the UAE surrounding law practices through innovative media. This is proven by the cases depicted in the series, as they are cases that commonly occur in the UAE. In addition to educating the public on law and politics, *Qalb Al Adala* depicts aspects of culture and gender equality in the UAE. The series observes the relationship between men and women in the UAE and portrays the strength and personality of Emirati women through the character of Farah. The series was well-received by the Emirati public. They claimed that *Qalb Al Adala* is a proper representation of the law and culture in

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[4] Taukeer.

[5] Alia Yunis, "Film As Nation Building: The UAE Goes Into the Movie Business," *CINEJ Cinema Journal* 3, no. 2 (October 13, 2014): 49, https://doi.org/10.5195/cinej.2014.98.

[6] Alittihad, *(Qalb Al Adala) Awalu Musalsalin Imaraatiyii 'ala (Natafaliikis)* (UAE: Al Mobawab al Ittihad, 2019).

[7] Ahmed Iman Zakaria, *Muraja'ah Limusalsali "Qalb Al Adala" Al Imaraatiyi Al-Ladzi Ta'arruduhu Niitafilkas* (Vice, 2019).

the UAE. However, some argue that the series does not fully represent the reality of the country in detail.[8] The series eventually acquired the rights for international broadcast on the platform Netflix and aired in 2019 with the title *Justice* قلب العدالة .

The airing of *Qalb Al Adala* on Netflix received positive responses from the Middle East, particularly among Emiratis. Other Arab countries participated in promoting the drama series through mass media. This is due to *Qalb Al Adala* being the first drama series from a Gulf Country that aired internationally on Netflix. The international airing of the series prompted the need to introduce the law and issues of feminism in the United Arab Emirates to global audiences with the hope of changing the perception towards culture in the Middle East, particularly in countries that are known for their paternalistic system such as the UAE. The rarity of Middle Eastern films that discuss issues of feminism and the lack of study towards the drama series *Qalb Al Adala* intrigued me to study and identify representations of feminism in the drama series. Based on an explanation above, this article in general aims to analyze the representations of feminism in the drama series *Qalb Al Adala*. More specific purposes include (1) explaining the meaning of the representations of feminism in the series, (2) explaining the signs that represent feminism in the series, and (3) identifying which feminism school of thought is represented in the series.

## 2. Methods

This study uses the qualitative descriptive method. Erickson (1968) argued that the qualitative study is a study that attempts to find and illustrate an activity and its impact in narrative form.[9] In this study, I observed and analyzed *Qalb Al Adala*, the primary data, by screen-capturing scenes that depict issues of feminism. Secondary data were also collected through literature reviews from books, articles, and other sources relevant to the topic of feminist depiction.[10] A semiotic approach is also applied in this study. This approach is one of the common approaches in literary criticism in which it attempts to find the meaning of a literary work through an analysis of signs contained in the work.[11] This study utilizes the semiotic approach by John Fiske to analyze the signs of feminism inside *Qalb Al Adala*. I took several scenes from the series that represent three sequences in film: prologue, ideological, and epilogue. The scenes are then analyzed using Fiske's codes of television by focusing on the code at the conventional representation level. The level analyzes narration, conflict, character, action, and dialogue. The method and approach used are proper for this study.

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[8] Zakaria.

[9] Albi Anggito and Johan Setiawan, *Metodologi Penelitian Penelitian Kualitatif* (Sukabumi: CV Jejak, 2018).

[10] Sue Thornham, "Feminist Media and Film Theory," in *Contemporary Feminist Theories* (Edinburgh University Press, 2022), 213–31.

[11] Maman Lesmana, *Kritik Sastra Arab Dan Islam* (Depok: Fakultas Ilmu Pengetahuan Budaya Universitas Indonesia, 2010).

## 3. Results and Discussion

This study uses both the theory of feminism and the semiotic theory. The theory of feminism is used to analyze the schools of feminism that are represented in *Qalb Al Adala*. In *An Introduction to Gender and Feminism: Understanding the Beginning of Criticism on Feminist Literature*, it is explained that feminism is a movement that demands emancipation and equality of rights for women. Feminism covers areas such as social, cultural, political, economic, theoretical, and moral philosophy.[12]There are several schools of feminist thought, namely liberal, radical, Marxist, socialist, existentialist, post-modern, multicultural, and ecofeminism.

Liberal feminism is based on principles of liberalism and believes that the main goal in life is individual freedom. This school of thought believes that women have to demand their rights in order to achieve equality and fair opportunities in society.[13] Liberal feminism is divided into classical-liberal feminism and egalitarian-liberal feminism. Classical-liberal feminism emphasizes the freedom of individual civil rights. Egalitarian-liberal feminism emphasizes equal and fair opportunities in accessing resources for women.[14]Radical feminism believes that gender injustice comes from biological differences. This school demands that families are an embodiment of the patriarchal system that dominates many aspects of life. Radical feminists tend to believe that women must hate men because men are the symbol of danger that threatens women.[15]

Marxist feminism perceives women in the principles of capitalism. This school believes that the status of a woman will fall due to the concept of personal wealth. This school also believes that if capitalism crumbles, the structure of society could be fixed and there would be no more injustice against women.[16]

Socialist feminism criticizes the concept of personal wealth argued by Marxist feminists. This school believes that the oppression and injustice against women are caused by the existence of a structural system. To understand the injustice against women, this school analyzes the issue through the lens of class and gender. The school also focuses on initiating changes in the economic system that involves not only women but also every member of society.[17]Existentialist feminism urges women to reject all forms of discrimination towards the rights and freedom of women in cultural, social, economic, and other sectors that could diminish their existence as humans. This school also urges women to establish themselves as a valuable and desired subject.[18]

Post-modern feminism believes that gender is not equal to identity or social

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[12] Alfian Rokhmansyah, *Pengantar Gender Dan Feminisme: Pemahaman Awal Kritik Sastra Feminisme* (Yogyakarta: Garudhawaca, 2016).
[13] Rokhmansyah.
[14] Andrea O'Reilly, *Matricentric Feminism: Theory, Activism, Practice* (Demeter Press, 2021).
[15] Rokhmansyah, *Pengantar Gender Dan Feminisme: Pemahaman Awal Kritik Sastra Feminisme*.
[16] Rokhmansyah.
[17] O'Reilly, *Matricentric Feminism: Theory, Activism, Practice*.
[18] Rokhmansyah, *Pengantar Gender Dan Feminisme: Pemahaman Awal Kritik Sastra Feminisme*.

structure. This school believes that the difference between the genders male and female must be accepted because both are related to each other. This school also believes that language is one of the sources of oppression against women. This urges them to prioritize feminine writing.[19] Multicultural feminism believes that all women are created differently. This school believes that women have differences related to their identity. These differences cause different experiences when facing gender injustice.[20]

Ecofeminism explains that there is a correlation between humans and nature in the form of human oppression. This school focuses on the spiritual relationship between women and the surrounding environment.[21] Semiotic theory is applied to analyze signs representing feminism in *Qalb Al Adala*. Semiotics theory is a method used to study signs and to identify how humans interpret many things.[22] Semiotics is also an attempt to discover signs that contain meaning and to recognize sign systems such as language, movement, music, and images.[23][24]

In his book titled *Introduction to Communication Studies*, John Fiske explained that semiotics has three main areas of study. These areas include signs, codes or systems that organize signs, and the culture where the codes and signs are applied. It can be concluded that one of the areas semiotics focuses on is the study of signs in texts. Signs can be understood as something physical and can be viewed by human senses implicitly as well as explicitly.[25] In film studies, Fiske proposed a theory on codes in television. According to Fiske, codes in television are related and create meaning. Codes in film study are divided into three levels: reality, representation, and ideology. Reality involves visual aspects such as appearance, makeup, costume, behavior, way of speech, movement, environment, and expression. Representation is differentiated into representation and conventional representation. The representation level involves codes such as the use of cameras, editing, lighting, and music, along with sound effects that represent the meaning of a situation. The conventional representation level involves narration, conflict, character, action, and dialogue in the film. The ideology level involves the representation of ideology built and portrayed in the film.

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[19] O'Reilly, *Matricentric Feminism: Theory, Activism, Practice*.
[20] Carolyn Zerbe Enns, Lillian Comas Díaz, and Thema Bryant-Davis, "Transnational Feminist Theory and Practice: An Introduction," *Women & Therapy* 44, no. 1–2 (2021): 11–26.
[21] Katherine R Allen, "Feminist Theory, Method, and Praxis: Toward a Critical Consciousness for Family and Close Relationship Scholars," *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships* 40, no. 3 (2023): 899–936.
[22] July Susanti Br Sinuraya, Anang Anas Azhar, and Hasan Sazali, "Analysis of Semiotics Representation of Feminism in the Mulan Film 2020," *International Journal of Cultural and Social Science* 3, no. 1 (2022): 94–105.
[23] O'Reilly, *Matricentric Feminism: Theory, Activism, Practice*.
[24] Catherine Constable, *Thinking in Images: Film Theory, Feminist Philosophy and Marlene Dietrich* (Bloomsbury Publishing, 2019).
[25] John Fiske, *Cultural and Communication Studies: Sebuah Pengantar Paling Komprehensif*, ed. Idi Subandy Ibrahim, trans. Yosal Iriantara and Idi Subandy Ibrahim (Yogyakarta: Jalasutra, 2018).

**Representations of Feminism in *Qalb Al Adala***

*Qalb Al Adala* is a legal drama series written by William Finkelstein and Walter Parkes with Marc Lorber as the producer. The series was produced by Beelink Productions and Image Nation Abu Dhabi FZ and aired on 17 September 2017 on the local TV station. It aired for eighteen episodes. The series starts with Farah, portrayed by actress Fatima Al Taei, an Emirati woman who works as a lawyer in the United Arab Emirates. Farah has returned to her home country after finishing her law degree in the USA and is striving to become like her father who is the most renowned lawyer in the country.

In the first episode, Farah who has finished law school in the USA decides to work independently and establish her own law firm. Farah is portrayed as a woman with high ambitions who does not want any help from her renowned father. Farah starts off her career by handling the case of a young man who claims to be involved in a hit-and-run accident. In the second episode, Farah opens up her law firm at a small office that she rented. Her second client brings a case of an inheritance dispute between a woman named Somaya and her brother. This episode also follows Mr. Hassan, Farah's father, who is handling a grand case; a murder involving the famous singer Nadine.

In the third episode, the accused Nadine approaches Farah and asks for her help. Meanwhile, Farah is handling another case involving the compensation money of a worker who had died at a construction site due to an accident. The episode also tells the story of a young witness trapped in an investigation related to alcohol smuggling. The fourth episode follows more of Nadine's case. Mr. Hassan wins Nadine's case and his involvement with the case brings a significant impact on his family.

The fifth episode follows a case related to Farah's family. Ahlam, a friend of Farah's sister Laila, is involved in a kidnapping incident in which the culprit demands a ransom. Mr. Hassan finds oddities in the case, as he felt there is some hidden motive for the kidnapping. This episode also follows Farah as she handles the murder committed by Reza Burhani. The sixth episode follows the development of Ahlam and Burhani's cases. Farah fails to defend Burhani and he is convicted. Farah also invites a child named Gholam to live with her and her family.

In the seventh episode, Ahlam's case makes a development that reveals the truth about Ahlam's relationship with a person named Sufyan. Farah takes on a new case involving a divorce and custody battle. Gholam colludes with a colleague of Reza Burhani to steal a Lamborghini owned by Farah's brother Rashid. In the eighth episode, Farah handles a new case in which a security guard named Saad is involved in a robbery at a currency exchange. This episode also follows Gholam as he finally meets his mother. In the ninth episode, Mr. Hassan handles a difficult case involving a 10-year-old girl with Asperger syndrome. Farah also handles a new case involving a young couple who married for the sake of gaining citizenship.

The tenth episode follows Laila applying to university and majoring in film

studies. Laila gets an offer from her professor to become a secretary. Farah helps an athlete who is involved in a legal predicament with a business competitor. In the eleventh episode, a romantic quarrel occurs between Farah and two suitors: Ali and Khaled. Farah is asked to choose one of the two for marriage. This episode also follows Farah as she handles a financially complicated divorce case. Meanwhile, Khaled creates a new strategy for handling the case of Ahmed Salem.

In the twelfth episode, Farah and Mr. Hassan face an inheritance dispute case. Mr. Hassan objects to Farah's involvement in the case, but Farah takes on the case and wins. This episode also follows the case of Ahmed Salem which ends with an unexpected witness.

Until the end of the series, the episodes show other cases and conflicts. We follow Khaled and Farah who deal with a sexual assault case, the relationship between Laila and her professor, and the handling of other cases such as murder, forgery, and drug-related cases.

**Character Analysis**

In this section, the dialogue analyzed was taken from several different scenes. The characters speak in Modern Standard Arabic (MSA) mixed with dialects. The dialogues analyzed for this study are the dialogues in MSA. The dialogues were analyzed to identify feminist representations in the series.

**Farah**



**Figure 1. Farah taking the lawyer's oath**

**Transcript of Farah's dialogue:**

3:23-3:50 E1:S1

"اقسم بالله العظيم، أن أؤدي أعمالي بامانة و شرف، وأن أحترم قوانين الدولة، وأن أحافظ على مهنة المحاماة، وأرعى تقاليدها و ادابها"

*"I swear to God Almighty that I will perform my duties with honesty and honor, respect the laws of the state, protect the legal profession, and respect its traditions and etiquette."*

In Figure 1, Farah is taking her oath during her inauguration. As an Arab woman, Farah has become a lawyer due to having the right to pursue education and work. Women in Arab countries have lower levels of social status and education compared to men as women tend to have limited rights. This is caused by the patrilineal concept dominating the country. It is difficult for women to pursue education and choose a profession they desire. In this scene, Farah proves that a woman in an Arab country,

especially in the United Arab Emirates, is allowed to pursue higher education and is able to work in a field that she desired. The freedom to pursue education and work for women is related to the concept of liberal-egalitarian feminism that emphasizes equal and fair opportunities for women in accessing public accommodations.



**Figure 2 Farah's family talking about her law firm**

**Transcript of Farah and Laila's dialogue:**
8:25-8:48 E1:S1

”عزيزتي فرح، لا تحزني. ربما لم يكن هذا المكتب مقدرالك. نأمل بعدما يمتلى، مكتبك بالموكلين، والقضايا والعديد من الاعمال، ستحصلين على مكتبك الخاص. كل شيء في وفته. لذا ابقي مع والدي في القت الراهن. فنحن في النهاية نحتاج الى عائلتنا لتحقيق مانريد"

"لا طبعا، نستطيع تحقيق الكثير أم تريدين من الجميع أن يكونوا مثل ماجد عديم الشخصية"

Laila: *"Dear Farah, don't be sad. Maybe this office wasn't meant for you. Hopefully, after you handle many clients and cases in the future, you will get your own office. Everything happens according to God's timing. For now, it's better to stay with father. In the end, we can't do anything without our family., right?"*

Farah: *"Of course not. We can achieve a lot of things. Or do you want everyone to be as spineless as Majid?"*

In Figure 2, Farah is attempting to open her own law firm by renting a small office. Farah wants to open the firm without the help of her father, but the office was sold before she could rent it, making her lose her chance. This is then brought into conversation by her family, and they asked Farah to work at her father's law firm instead. In this scene, Farah shows her ambition to be independent by answering Laila with *"Laa Thab'an"* which means "of course not." Farah does not want to work at her father's firm and still intends to open her own firm. Farah's ambition to become independent and not depend on other people reflects the values of liberal feminism that emphasize how women are able to achieve their careers independently.



**Figure 3. Mr. Hassan and Farah**

**Transcript of Mr. Hassan and Farah's conversation:**
9:24-9:58 E1:S1

استاذ حسن: "تعريف أن لديك مكتبا. أم نسيت أن مكتبي مفتوح لك في أي وقت؟"

فرح: "لكنه مكتبك"

استاذ حسن: "و هل هناك فرق قي ذلك؟ هل تحتاجين إلى النقود؟"

فرح: *يهز رأسه*

استاذ حسن: "لا تريدين أي شئ مني، على أية حال. مكتبي يحتاج لك و هو مفتوح أمامك في أي وقت تشائين"

Mr. Hassan : *"You know that you have an office. My firm is open for you at any time."*
Farah : *"But that's your office."*
Mr. Hassan : *"Is there a difference? Do you need money?"*
Farah : **Shakes head**
Mr. Hassan : *"So you don't want anything from me. However, my firm needs you. My doors are always open for you."*

The scene in Figure 3 depicts Mr. Hassan asking Farah to work for his law firm after she failed to open her own firm. Farah declines because she still wants to open her law firm and does not want to depend on her father's law firm. This scene shows Farah's stubborn and firm personality in upholding her values to become independent. Her character and personality depict the values of liberal feminism in which women strive to achieve their goals through their own efforts and hard work.



**Figure 4. Farah and Laila**

**Transcript of Farah and Laila's conversation:**
22:14-22:47 E1:S1

فرح: "هل ترين أن مصلحتك ستكون مع ماجد بالزواج منه والنسيان حول طموحك في التدريس؟ كل هذا لكي تصبحي امرأته وربة منزله؟"

ليلي: "لا أحب التدريس بل أحب الأطفال وزواجي من ماجد سيحقق هذا الحلم لي لطالما تمنيت أن تكوني محامية مثل والدي. و لطالما تمنيت أن أصبح والدة مثل أمي. ليس ضروريا تنطبق مصلحتك على اآلخرين. يعيش كل منا ليحقق حلمه الخاص. لا يمكنك أخذ أحلام غيرك يا فرح. هل فهمت؟"

Farah: *"Do you think that this marriage is worth it, so much so that you throw away your ambition to teach? All this so that you can marry Majid and become a housewife?"*
Laila: *"I don't like teaching, but I love children. Marrying Majid will make my dream come true. All your life, you have always wanted to be a lawyer like father. On the other hand, I have always wished to become a housewife like mother. What you think is best for you does not have to apply to others. Each of us has our own dreams to fulfill. You cannot force your dreams onto others, Farah. Do you understand?"*

The scene in Figure 4 depicts Farah talking with her sister Laila in Laila's room. They talk about Farah's work and Laila's life principles. Farah does not agree with Laila's decision to get married and become a housewife. Farah tends to have a broader concept of women's rights due to her experience studying in the USA. Farah also has ambitions to live independently and become a successful career woman. Farah's concept of thinking portrayed in this scene represents existential feminism because of her actions persuading Laila to establish herself as a valuable subject.



**Figure 5. Mr. Hassan and Farah**

23:11-23:20 E1:S1

**Transcript of Mr. Hassan and Farah's conversation:**

استاذ حسن: "قضة حديدة؟"

فرح: "لا تنس انني محامية و يمكنني تولي قضية كاملة بنفسي. بمجرد أن أستلم أتعابي، سأحصل على مكتبي الخاص"

Mr. Hassan : *"A new case?"*
Farah : *"Don't forget that I am a lawyer. I can handle a case by myself. Once I have enough money, I will have my own office."*

The scene in Figure 5 depicts Mr. Hassan giving a book to Farah for her to study with. Mr. Hassan asks Farah about the case she is busy with. Through Farah's answer in the dialogue above, she still has the ambition to establish her own law firm. She wants to open the firm with her own money. This aligns with the concept of liberal feminism which believes women are able to access equal sources with men.



**Figure 6. Mr. Hassan and Farah**

**Transcript of Mr. Hassan and Farah's conversation**
31:02-31:23 E1:S1

استاذ حسن: "كيف حصلت على هذا؟"

فرح: "هذا لا يهم، ما يهم هو معرفتي بأن والدي قام بتوقيع عقد المكتب الوحيد المناسب لي لماذا كل هذا؟ كي لا أعتمد على نفسي؟ كي أبقى تابعة لوالدي المحامي الالمع، أستاذ حسن؟"

Mr. Hassan : *"How did you get this?"*
Farah : *"That doesn't matter. What matters is knowing that my father has bought the office that I wanted. Why? So that I couldn't depend on myself and rely on my father to work at his firm, the brilliant lawyer, Mr. Hassan?"*

The scene in Figure 6 depicts an angry Farah when she finds documents related to the office she wanted to rent in her father's office. Farah's gesture when she confronted her father and the way she handled the situation portrayed her as having big ambitions and having the right to show that she is capable of establishing her own firm. She wants to be known as herself and not as her father's daughter. This relates to the concept of existential feminism which focuses on rejecting acts that discriminate against women's rights and freedom that affect their existence as humans.



**Figure 7. Khaled and Farah**

**Transcript of Farah's dialogue**

44:30-44:56 E7:S1

فرح: "دعني أرتّب المكتب أولًا و بعدها يمكن أن أفكر بالزواج"

Farah : *"Let me tidy up my office first. Then I can think of marriage."*

The scene in Figure 7 depicts Khaled visiting Farah's law firm. Khaled is in love with Farah and asks her what she thinks about marriage. Farah's answer, as seen in the dialogue above, shows that Farah is focused on her work and career, thus she has not considered marriage. Farah's firm answer to Khaled's question shows that she still wants the freedom to achieve her dreams. Farah's stubbornness to be independent and not wanting a partner represents liberal feminism because she still desires freedom and wants to have the chance to make her dreams come true.



**Figure 8. Khaled and Farah**

**Transcript of Farah and Khaled's conversation**
1:01-1:13 E16:S1

فرح: "لكني أريد أن أكّون نفسي أولاً. أريد تحقيق سمعة مماثلة لسمعة والدي"

Farah : *"But I want to establish myself first. I want to achieve a reputation similar to my father."*

This scene in Figure 8 depicts Khaled asking Farah to immediately hold a wedding. Farah declines because she felt that they need to know each other better. Farah also confines in Khaled of her desire to keep having a career and to build her reputation as a formidable lawyer. In this dialogue, Farah is portrayed as a woman who wants to be acknowledged for her success. This relates to the concept of existential feminism which considers women as a valuable object.

**Signs Representing Feminism in *Qalb Al Adala***

In analyzing television codes of conventional representation, Fiske argues that the level of conventional representation is divided into five aspects: narration, conflict, character, action, and dialogue. In this study, I will focus on the character aspect. In *Qalb Al Adala*, the character is one of the important aspects because they can represent feminist values. Farah, the main character of the series, is portrayed as a strong, independent, stubborn, and ambitious character. She always holds on to her principles of wanting to be successful without relying on others, especially her family. Both her appearance and makeup also portray Farah as a bold individual. Her way of speech is firm, as seen by the way she talks to her father and the way she

defends her clients in court. This portrayal leans towards liberal feminism where Farah is depicted as someone who wants to earn equal rights and opportunities in public and in her profession.

Another female character in this series is Laila, Farah's sister. In the series, Laila is portrayed as a gentle, obedient, anxious, and sensitive character. Her character is the opposite of Farah's. Laila is a woman who wants to be a housewife and is not interested to pursue a higher education or an office job. Laila's character is also portrayed through her appearance and makeup. Laila's makeup is not as bold as Farah's, representing her feminine nature. From her way of speech, Laila speaks in a softer tone compared to Farah. These differences depict multicultural feminism that believes women have many differences related to their identity.

**Analysis of Level of Ideology**

*Qalb Al Adala* portrayed the ideology of feminism which involves women who want gender equality between men and women. The series focuses on a female main character and other female characters in its story. The rights of women are portrayed vividly in this series. An example of this is when Farah and Laila attend university and study in their respective majors. This scene portrays the right of women to pursue education. Women are also portrayed as having the right to pursue any profession they desire. This can be seen through the main character Farah pursuing her career as a lawyer; a career she has long yearned for. The existence of equal rights and fair opportunities for both women and men in this series shows that *Qalb Al Adala* portrays liberal feminist ideology.

The series also portrays existentialist feminist ideology. This is shown through the character Farah as she has a strong ambition to establish her own law firm and strives to become a renowned lawyer like her father. In several other scenes, Farah also pushes other women to build their self-worth through opportunities for education and work.

## 4. Conclusion

It can be concluded that there are representations of liberal and existential feminism in the drama series *Qalb Al Adala*. These representations are shown through the dialogues and scenes involving the main character, Farah. Farah, a new lawyer in the UAE, attempts to establish her own law firm without the help of others, especially from her family. Farah is more independent due to her experience studying abroad in the USA and wanted to focus more on her career by building a good reputation as a lawyer. Of the eight scenes studied above, five scenes depict liberal feminism, and three scenes depict existentialist feminism. Overall, the drama series is more inclined to represent liberal feminism. Farah as a depiction of an Arab woman shows that Middle East countries, especially in the United Arab Emirates, have accepted issues of feminism by applying these ideologies in media. The airing of *Qalb Al Adala* on Netflix gives a platform to introduce the cultural and feminist issues in the Middle East to an international audience in an explicit way. This could possibly change the

mindset of international viewers about the stereotype of the patriarchal system that is dominant in the Middle East.

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